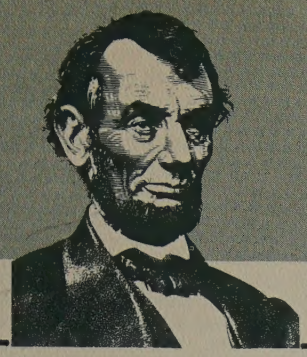

Lincoln Lore

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ELMER EPHRAIM ELLSWORTH

Editor's Note: This brief sketch of Elmer E. Ellsworth has been prepared as a vehicle for the publication of five original, unpublished letters recently acquired by the Foundation; namely Ellsworth to Nicolay, Sherman to Nicolay, Charles H. Spofford to Nicolay, E. D. Ellsworth to Nicolay and Carrie Spofford to Nicolay.

When the Lincoln presidential party left Springfield, Illinois, on February 11, 1861 enroute to Washington, D. C. for the inaugural ceremonies, Elmer Ephraim Ellsworth, a young man of twenty-four, was charged with the responsibility of the safe conduct of the president-elect.

Young Ellsworth first met Lincoln in December, 1859 while on a tour with his Zouave drill company to Springfield. While his real interest was a military career, he was determined to study law. This decision resulted from the suggestion of Charles H. Spofford, a banker of Rockford, Illinois, whose daughter was engaged to Ellsworth.

Lincoln liked Ellsworth and more than once expressed an earnest desire that he move to Springfield and make his office his headquarters. The young man moved to Springfield at the time when the 1860 presidential campaign was in full swing, and very little progress was made in learning the legal profession.

Another of Ellsworth's acquaintances was John George Nicolay, who was to become Lincoln's private secretary. Nicolay was a member of the Springfield Grays, and perhaps through this military organization the two men became good friends.

Assassination of Colonel Elmer E. Ellsworth

The problem of being appropriately dressed as a private secretary and as a guard of the president-elect involved expensive tailoring projects. The following undated letter from Ellsworth to Nicolay gives the details:

"Dear George.

"Your measure came to hand this P. M. and I placed it in the hands of the tailor with orders to proceed to manufacture Coat Pants & vest forthwith. I am getting a pair of pants & vest from the same style of goods which I think for traveling & morning wear would suit you admirably. I shall leave your measure with the tailor & when you see the garment you can order duplicates if you choose. Understand me I have now ordered for you a business style of frock of black cloth & dress vest of black velvet and do pants of doeskin. Now 'In Re.' Shirts, as *we* lawyers say—I find upon close inquiry among those who wear the article that a good quality of shirt costs $24 pr Doz—I will however extend my reshirtses—(don't let John (Hay) see this) and may do better. I have not, thus far committed myself to any policy concerning shirts.

"People here are in a huge sweat about secession matters and the believe (sic) among the better informed is that some attempt on the Capital or Mr. L-s life will surely be made—apropos I leave this city of Patriopse & beauty.

"I trust that if any thing is likely to demand my presence in Springfield, that you will not neglect to inform me. I shall remain here until Saturday night—then go to Rockford & return via Freeport & shall Embrace you (attired in new pantaloons without suspenders & with stripes)—on Monday morning if — nothing happens. I have closed up everything here—& shall be ready to go off on half cock at the shortest possible notice — I find that this matter of accompanying the president-elect involves an expense which, if I were not a (prospective) million-air would make my pocket-book exceedingly easy of transportation. I don't propose to make a very elaborate apology for the style of this brief letter—I will merely say that my matters have accumulated in such *piles* that I cannot rest a moment — since the commencement of this I have assumed every conceiveable position — & am now contemplating the expediency of being turned up—& copper bottomed—made *bum* (bomb) proof — (conceal this from your friend Hay) — May I not hear from you by Saturday?

Believe me, in haste
Your friend
Ellsworth

Thursday. 11 p.m."

The annals of the Civil War record vividly the death of Colonel Ellsworth at Alexandria, Virginia on May 23, 1861, "the first commissioned officer to lose his life in the great fraternal struggle." Once the Union forces had seized Alexandria, Ellsworth rashly cut down a Confederate flag flying atop the Marshall House. While descending the stairs he was killed instantly by James W. Jackson, the proprietor of the hotel, who in turn was killed by Corporal Brownell.

The remains of Ellsworth were first placed in the engine-house at the Washington Navy Yard, but at the

Colonel Elmer E. Ellsworth

express wish of President Lincoln they were taken to the White House for the funeral services. The death of Lincoln's young friend was a personal bereavement.

Before the funeral arrangements were changed from the Navy Yard to the White House, Nicolay received the following communication:

"Washington, D. C.
May 24, 1861

Sir:

You are requested to attend the funeral, as pall-bearer of the late Col. Ellsworth N. Y. Zouaves, which will take place from the Navy Yard tomorrow at eleven A. M.

Very Respectively
Your Obt. Svt.
T. W. Sherman
Maj. 3 Art.
in charge of arran.

Nicollay, Esq.
President's Mansion"

On May 24, Nicolay wrote to his fiancee Therena Bates: "I had supposed myself to have grown quite indifferent and callous and hard-hearted, until I heard of the sad fate of Col. Ellsworth, who, as you will already have read, was assassinated at the taking of Alexandria by our troops on last Friday morning. But since that time I have been quite unable to keep the tears out of my eyes whenever I have thought, or heard, or read, about it, until I have almost concluded that I am quite a weak and womanish sort of creature. I had known and seen him almost daily for more than six months past, and although our intimacy was never in any way confidential as to personal matters, I had learned to value him very highly. He was very young—only 24, I think—very talented and very poor—a combination of the qualities upon which sadness and misfortune seem to prey. He had by constant exertion already made himself famous, and that against obstacles that would have been unsurmountable to any other. Since by acquaintance with him my position has enabled me to assist him in his plans and aspirations until I felt almost a direct personal pride and interest in his success. Knowing his ability and his determined energy I knew that he would win a brilliant success if life were spared to him. So that to me his death seems almost a fatality, and though I know the whole nation will mourn for him, yet I am grieved also to feel that they do not half appreciate his worth or their loss.

"Of course you will have read the war news, and seen that our troops are in possession of Alexandria and Arlington Heights. There have been all sorts of rumors yesterday and today, about conflicts in different directions, but we have nothing certain or official."

The death of Ellsworth released a veritable flood of addresses, sermons, editorials, poems and songs to his memory. The classic production being Lincoln's letter to Ellsworth's parents which is the finest monument to the rash young colonel:

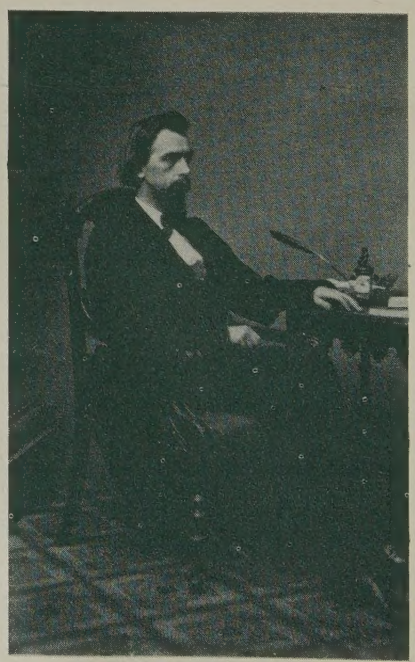
"In the untimely loss of your noble son, our affliction here, is scarcely less than your own. So much of promised usefulness to one's country, and of bright hopes for one's self and friends, have rarely been so suddenly dashed, as in his fall. In size, in years, and in youthful appearance, a boy only, his power to command men, was surpassingly great. This power, combined with a fine intellect, an indomitable energy, and a taste altogether military, constituted in him, as seemed to me, the best natural talent, in that department, I ever knew. And yet he was singularly modest and deferential in social intercourse. My acquaintance with him began less than two years ago; yet through the latter half of the intervening period, it was as intimate as the disparity of our ages, and my engrossing engagements, would permit. To me, he appeared to have no indulgences or pastimes; and I never heard him utter a profane, or an intemperate word. What was conclusive of his good heart, he never forgot his parents. The honors he labored for so laudably, and, in the sad end, so gallantly gave his life, he meant for them, no less than for himself.

"In the hope that it may be no intrusion upon the sacredness of your sorrow, I have ventured to address you this tribute to the memory of my young friend, and your brave and early fallen child.

"May God give you that consolation which is beyond all earthly power. Sincerely your friend in a common affliction—

A. Lincoln"

Ellsworth's death came as a crushing blow to Carrie Spofford, and on May 27, 1861 from Rockford, Illinois, Charles H. Spofford wrote Nicolay: "Understanding that you are acquainted with the relation the late Col. Ellsworth sustained to my family, I feel that you will not regard me as obtrusive in the following requests—will you at your earliest convenience inform me of any particulars connected with his death that shall not have been published at the time. In a letter to my Daughter he speaks of having written to her while on the Steamer Baltic, on his way from N. Y. to Washington & also immediately after his arrival at W. These letters, have not been recd. and may be among his papers at W. Will you ascertain if such is the case provided his effects have not been forwarded to his parents. In the great accumulation of his correspondence it has sometimes



John G. Nicolay

happened that letters which he supposed were mailed, were left among his papers. Any circumstances connected with his life or death which you think would interest us please communicate."

Ellsworth's parents were quite eager to secure their son's personal belongings as well as those of his brother Charles, who died on June 16, 1860 in Chicago while a member of the Zouave Cadets. From Mechanicsville, New York, on June 26, 1861 E. D. Ellsworth wrote Nicolay: "We received your welcom Letter this morning and we felt disapointed to hear that Elmer's trunks had not Ben Shipt to us as he gave me Mr. Cook adress & I had writen to him Some two months ago & I wated & then I wrote to Mr Lincon if he could get them to Ship them to me By Rail Road as fraight & take a Recept for them & Send the Recpt to me in a Letter. Now Mr Nickley if you can have them Sente to me & have them come on the Rail Road By fraight I wish you would, it will obleage me very much. I no, it will Cost a good deal But I want them as his Brother's things are among them, & they have a grate many friends hear that wants Something that belonge to Elmer if it is old pleas have them Sent as soon as possable & obleage. the furniture they nead not Send But this Rest we would like to have."

On the third page of the folded stationery, Ellsworth's father wrote the following: "N. B Mr Nicolay Sir Mr Warren I think will be in washington before you get this I think to See Mr. Hay as Respect the writing the Life of our Son & Mr Bullard has writen to Mr Hay that Mr. Warren, an uncle of Carrie Spofford had got the refusal of our Sons papers that we had, & he an Miss Spofford was coming up to our place as soon as we got his trunks from Springfield, & was down to waterford yestarday & Mr Bullard wrote to Mr. Hay wile I was thare So Mr Hay will no, what they have concluded on before this reaches you.

"Please give our love to Mr. & Mrs. Lincoln also to all of Elmer's Friends your Self & Mr Hay in particular."

It appears that Nicolay and Hay were finally able to ship Ellsworth's personal belongings to his parents in New York. Nicolay is believed to have requested that Ellsworth's sword be turned over to him as a momento of his friendship with the Colonel. Unfortunately for Nicolay, this request was refused.

In a letter from Carrie Spofford, from Mechanicsville, dated August 13, 1861 to Nicolay she wrote: "I received the package of letters by express yesterday, please accept my thanks for your kindness and trouble. The Col's effects have arrived from Springfield and in accordance with your request asked him about the sword, but I am sorry to say, he refused to part with it."

Speaking of Ellsworth's death, Lincoln said, "poor fellow, it was doubtless an act of rashness, but it only shows the heroic spirit that animates our soldiers, from high to low, in this righteous cause of ours." Continuing his interview with a *New York Herald* correspondent Lincoln said: "There is one fact that has reached me which is a great consolation to my heart, and quite a relief after this melancholy affair. I learn from several persons that when the Stars and Stripes were raised in Alexandria, many of the people of the town actually wept for joy, and manifested the liveliest gratification at seeing this familiar and loved emblem once more floating above them."

GOLD PLATED COAT OF MAIL

A. H. Flanders of Burlington, Iowa, read a disturbing newspaper story in early 1861. The undated, unidentified article consisted of about four inches of fine print one column wide, and bore the heading: *Important From Baltimore, Treasonable Organization. Attempt to Browbeat Gov. Hicks.* This article carried a quotation from a letter stating "that 12,000 had taken solemn oaths to prevent the inauguration of Lincoln—march upon Washington—capture the city and make it the capital of a southern republic." The final paragraph read: "There are even darker threats whispered around, involving nothing more or less than the assassination of Lincoln and Hamlin."

It is believed that Flanders visited Springfield, Illinois, with the idea of contacting either president-elect Lincoln or John G. Nicolay, the future president's private secretary, with a plan to provide for Lincoln's protection. Apparently Nicolay listened courteously to Flander's proposal and then dismissed him without giving further thought to the matter.

Not to be outdone, Flanders wrote Nicolay on January 12, 1861, from Burlington, enclosing the alarming newspaper story:

"Since seeing you it has occurred to me that it would be appropriate to present to the president through yourself some testimonials as to my responsibility and fitness for the purpose of procuring the suitable defense for his person of which we were speaking.

"You will perceive that I have occupied the Chair of Chemistry in one of the Philadelphia colleges.

"The professorship of Chemistry is one which necessarily brought me in contact with workers in metals, and makers of apparatus generally.

"I am confident that among them or others in New York, I can find a person who can make the article I spoke of; to be plated with gold, so that the perspiration shall not affect it, and to be covered with silk, and worn over an ordinary undershirt.

"I now propose to go to New York by way of Philadelphia, in about a week.

"Should the President conclude to allow me to provide for his personal safety in this way, I shall be very happy to do so. The accompanying testimonials, I think, may assure him of my discretion.

"I should be glad to hear from you in the course of the next week, if Mr. Lincoln comes to any decision about it.

"If thought desirable I will return via Springfield and obtain the necessary measurements, so as to lose no time.

"If you will be kind enough to return the enclosed letters (testimonials) to me, after the President has seen them, (if he gives them so much time) you will oblige.

"N.B. I am far from wishing to alarm either yourself or the President, but you will see by the enclosed slip that dark threats have been made."

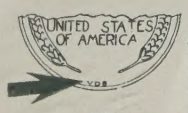
There is no indication that Nicolay replied to Flanders' letter of January 12. However, Flanders wrote Nicolay from Philadelphia on January 26, and he sent the private secretary a third letter from New York on January 27. The New York letter follows:

"I wrote you a line yesterday from Philadelphia, stating that I had ascertained that I could certainly get the coat of mail made in that city. The first man I went to—a gentleman, who in times past, has made instruments and apparatus for me, had seen similar coats of defensive armor in London, where he formerly resided. He explained to me that the kind known as scale armor was the best; to be made of a peculiar kind of hardened and tempered steel in plates, of which I sent you a specimen. These are to overlap each other, and to be riveted together in such a way as to be sufficiently flexible.

"I have ascertained that I can also get it made here in case I prefer to do so.

"If Mr. Lincoln wishes to be protected in this way, he had better get an undershirt made to fit him exactly, as a coat fits when buttoned up, to reach from the neck to the hip bones, and also as low behind and in front as would not interfere with sitting down. Let this be measured and cut by a tailor from woolen flannel, and ascertained to be an exact fit by buttoning. This should not be washed, and should fit well about the armholes, reaching midway to the elbow. This I can have stuffed with

V D B LINCOLN CENTS



1909

The initials of the engraver, Victor D. Brenner, appear prominently on some of the 1909 Lincoln cents as illustrated here. It is a little known numismatic fact, however that Lincoln cents dated later than 1918 also have the same initials on Lincoln's shoulder in much smaller type—a strong magnifying glass is usually necessary to locate the tiny letters.

1918 and later

Courtesy of Tatham Stamp & Coin Co.

cotton, and then make the coat of mail exactly to fit over it.

"If he concludes to have this done there is not much time to lose. You can send it to me by mail or express. If by express write me a letter the same day to New York stating by what express sent, and then I will go to the express office and get it. It will probably take about 10 or 12 days to make the one here after the pattern is received.

"Then I will send it to him at Springfield, or he can come by way of Philadelphia or New York (going to Washington) and if any alteration is required to make a good fit, it can be done then and there.

"I am told that Napoleon III is constantly protected in this way, and that his life was thus saved from small pieces of the Orsini shells, which killed his horses, and several persons.

"I shall be very happy to get this done for Mr. Lincoln if he will accept it, and really hope he will not go to Washington without it.

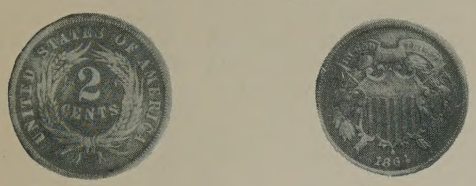
"I am confident I can get it done without any one knowing that it is for him.

"You will see by reckoning up the time there is not any to lose, if he will have this done.

"If he has concluded to have nothing done about it, please inform me to that effect, if it will not be too much trouble."

Certainly no one believes that Lincoln made his inaugural journey wearing a gold-plated coat of mail, but these Flanders' letters constitute one of many crack-pot ideas that were advanced by opportunists, not necessarily to protect the person of the president, but to win favor with the new administration.

IN GOD WE TRUST



Obverse **Reverse**

Two-Cent Pieces—1864

"In God We Trust" was first used as a coin motto on the two cent pieces minted in 1864. It's use was extended to include other denominations by the law of March 3, 1865, a month and a half before Lincoln's assassination.

Salmon P. Chase, Lincoln's Secretary of the Treasury, is generally credited with having secured the necessary legislation to express the trust of the American people in the Diety.

The striking off of the coins bearing the motto was a significant contribution of the Lincoln administration to the religious and patriotic life of the nation.

A MURDER IN KANSAS

Abraham Lincoln was once blamed as the indirect cause of a murder which was committed in Wyandotte, Kansas in 1864. This fantastic charge resulted from an alleged remark by the President that Samuel Hallett "ought to be spanked."

Hallett was a contractor and general manager of the Kansas Pacific Railroad. He was killed on July 27, 1864 by O. A. Talcutt, the K. P. R. chief engineer, who represented the money interests who were constructing the road. Talcutt charged Hallett with mismanagement of funds and it was claimed that he wrote Lincoln that Hallett "was constructing a cheap road, that the material was of the poorest kind, and that the bridges would not hold up a year."

Sometime during the month of May 1864, Hallett went to Washington and while there conferred with President Lincoln about the road. During the interview Lincoln is said to have called attention to Talcutt's letter. But Hallett defended his actions, made a showing of his contract, and the amount of work done, whereupon Lincoln is alleged to have said that Talcutt "ought to be spanked."

In alleging that Lincoln was the indirect cause of the murder, it was claimed that "Mr. Hallett mailed Talcutt's letter to Lincoln to his brother John." John Hallett then showed Talcutt the letter and said, "President Lincoln says you should be spanked and I am going to do it." John was a big, powerful man and he took Talcutt across his knee and administered the spanking. Some observers said he whipped Talcutt, a small, feeble man, within an inch of his life, while others say that the spanking was merely a humiliating experience.

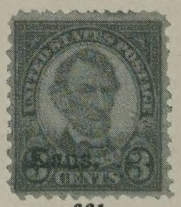
On the morning of July 27, 1864, Talcutt rode into Wyandotte from Quindaro and hitched his pony in front of Holcomb's drugstore on Third Street, two or three doors north of the Garno House. He had with him a Henry rifle. About an hour later Hallett was seen coming across the street some sixty feet north of the drugstore. Taking deliberate aim Talcutt shot Hallett in the back and he died before he could be carried into the Garno House.

Some accounts state that Talcutt was never brought to trial, while others say that he was arrested some fifteen years later and a trial was held. It would be interesting to know what actually happened to O. A. Talcutt.

J. D. Cruise in his *Recollections of Kansas History* stated that "the shot that killed Sam Hallett made it possible for Kansas City, Missouri, instead of Kansas City, Kansas, to become the greater city to date. If Samuel Hallett had been allowed to live, a bridge across the Missouri river at Parkville would have been built and Wyandotte would undoubtedly be a city of 200,000 souls today. His plans were to this end. He generally accomplished his ends."

Perhaps John Speer, writing for the Topeka *Commonwealth* has best absolved Lincoln of any involvement in the affair: "I think the story of president Lincoln showing Samuel Hallett a letter from Talcutt in a familiar way is exceedingly thin. I do not think Talcutt ever wrote to the president, and if he had done so Hallett was not in the habit of walking into the executive chamber and familiarly reading Abe's letters."

3¢ VIOLET–STATE SURCHARGED STAMPS KANSAS–NEBRASKA



661

672

A special issue of surcharged stamps was prepared by overprinting the abbreviations "Kas." and "Neb." on stamps of the 1922-23 series (Regular Issue of 1926-27) in denominations of 1 to 10 cents, inclusive.

These stamps were placed on sale in all post offices in the respective states with the exception of Kansas City, Topeka, and Wichita, Kansas, Lincoln and Omaha, Nebraska.

This issue of surcharged stamps was authorized as a measure of preventing losses from post-office burglaries.

The surcharge was printed in black ink across the lower half of the stamp. Approximately a year's supply of the stamps were printed and issued to Kansas and Nebraska postmasters. They were first placed on sale May 1, 1929. The Post Office Department discontinued the sale of the state surcharged stamps after the initial supply was used.

For a technical description of these stamps see *Lincoln Lore* 1432, June, 1957, page 2. United States Post Office Department: A Description of United States Postage Stamps, 1955, page 70.